

1381. By 1399, before the fall of his ill-fated 'kitten', Richard II, the poet himself seems to have been dead.

His very grave was soon forgotten. His work lived on orphaned of his name. Yet it lived. Piers Plowman became a stock figure, like the now almost equally extinct John Bull during the last two centuries. Nameless hands compose *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, The Praier and Complaynte of the Plowman unto Christe, A lytell Geste howe the Plowman lerned his Pater Noster*; then, as the passions of the Reformation revive interest in this ancient satirist of the *Chaucer, Piers Plowman's Exhortation unto the Lordes, Knightes, Burgoysse of the Parliament House* (1547-53) and *Goodlye Dialogue and Dysputacion between Pyers Plowman and a Popish Preest* (c. 1548). In 1550 *Piers Plowman* itself attained the dignity of print. Crowley, its printer, admonishes his readers that, its alliterative system once grasped, 'The metre shall be very pleasaunt to reade'; and that the language though 'somewhat darcke* need not deter them, if only they will pull themselves together and 'not sticke to break the shell of the nutte for the kernelles sake'—the kernel being the benefit of finding their own short-comings 'here most charitably rebuked'. The appetite of our ancestors for being 'charitably rebuked* and also, no doubt, for seeing the Papists rebuked not so charitably, carried the book through three editions in that one year

and a fourth in 1561. There are also allusions
to the poem
in Bishops Bale and Ridley, echoes in Skelton
and Spenser, a paraphrase of part by Drayton. Stow
makes its
author a Fellow of Oriel; David Buchanan (?
1595~1652)
with Scottish patriotism boldly transplants
him, in the
frock of 'a Benedictine monk', to Aberdeen,
By Puttenham and Meres he is fitted, looking rather
lost and un-
comfortable, into a place in the polite literary
pedigree of
Satire, between Juvenal and Bishop Hall; a
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